8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

grateful. It is a land of hard realities. This Ireland is subject to hot flashes of anger and dispute which throw into relief deep-lying hatreds and fierce loyalties. We all know something of the Land War and Sinn Fein and the bitter internecine strife of the Trouble. If we know anything of Ireland's history we see these rough upheavals of a tranquil scene as great punctuation marks upon a red page of struggle lasting seven hundred years. This is the Ireland of bitter economic fate and political unrest. Much of this can be laid at England's door, but not all. The Ireland of the Irish is no more free of internal strife than any other land.

Most of us recognize a fourth Ireland as well, especially those who are Catholics. It is the Ireland of the Faith, the Island of Saints and Scholars. It is the land of the devout, where word and deed breathe a religious fervour which most of us have forgotten. This is the land of holy wells and pilgrimages and roadside shrines. Well-filled churches rise above every hamlet now and the black-frocked priest is a familiar friendly figure. To many of us, perhaps a paradox lies here. Fierce love of political liberty goes hand in hand with a deep devotion to the most authoritarian of Christian creeds.

Nor is this the only paradox in a land of surprises where even the sun and sky are inconsistent. The beauty of the Irish landscape lies in the never-ending change of colour. A momentary break of sun

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER XVIII

SOME CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS. I.

With the many material survivals from the past which we have mentioned in earlier chapters there lives on an imposing body of customs and superstitious beliefs of which we can attempt to give no more than a summary description. They concern not only the visible world with its common elements and events—water, fire, stones, salt, iron, trees, cattle, crops, harvest, food and drink, birth, marriage and death—and the relics of former ages—raths or "forths," great stone monuments, stone axes, flint arrowheads, spinning whorls and "crocks of gold"—but also the unseen or rarely glimpsed world of giants, fairies and other beings. All the major processes of the farmer's year had their appropriate magic rites which clung to them from the beginning. Many of these superstitions are so deep-rooted that centuries of opposition from the Christian Church have failed to suppress them, and while it has driven some practices into secrecy it has been forced to take others under its protection.

This applies, for instance, to the cult of holy wells, which is, like the worship of stones and the veneration of thorn trees, probably megalithic in origin and seems to carry us back to the sunnier lands of the Mediterranean where the megalithic religion took its rise. It has been calculated that there are some 3,000 holy wells in Ireland: many of them are still visited, generally at the festival seasons which we described in the last chapter, and it is customary for the devotees to tie

791 ●
312
788
755
778
[p. 163]

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

mentions that at one time the people of Inishkea were much noted for it, and that the fate of the two men, who some time in the last century ruined themselves in a lawsuit about a sheep, became proverbial, and litigants were warned to remember the fate of "Malley and Malone." C. O.[1] also refers to this peculiarity, which nowadays seems to be more characteristic of the mainland people than the islanders. 691

In the course of the cases arising from this tendency, many curious examples of ingenious cross-swearing occur. Intoxication is rather prevalent on fair days and holidays, and at weddings and other festive occasions, but at ordinary times there is not much of it among the country people. They appear to be conscientious in their religious observances, and depend much on the guidance and advice of their clergy. 181 [273] [771]

As will be judged from the extent and variety of their folk-lore, they have a great love for the supernatural and mystical. [789]

As regards morals, though illegitimacy is by no means unknown, yet, when the size of the population is taken into account, it is so rare as to be very creditable to the moral tone of the people.[2] [848]

A stand-up fight rarely occurs when men quarrel, there may be one or two blows struck, or stone-throwing may be indulged in, but disputes do not usually get beyond cursing and vituperation. [578]

As parents they are affectionate, but careless and unequal in their treatment of their children, at one time over indulging them, and at another punishing severely for a slight fault. [855]

With regard to industry, but little can be said in their favour, though energetic by starts, during which they are capable of a great deal of work, accounts agree in stating that they dislike steady occupation, and are indolent. It should be remembered, however, that there has hitherto been but little inducement to them to cultivate steady industry. The women seem always to have plenty of work on hand, and to do it. 461 181

In this district, as in many others, the people are not very careful in their re-payment of debts, and shopkeepers do not now give credit to the same extent as formerly. As to rent and cess, to the payment of these, too, a strong aversion is often manifested. 181 426

Many of their habits are not over cleanly, though this is largely due to the wretched nature of their houses, and a strict regard for truth is not a prominent part of their character. 181 515 577

---

[1] "Sketches in Erris and Tyrawley."

[2] The total number of cases which occurred between the years 1884 and 1893 was 18.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

I

IRELAND THE OUTPOST

THE charm of Ireland, north as well as south, lies as much in the colourful speech and old-fashioned ways of her people as in the beauty of her green fields and blue hills, the silver-glint of lake waters and the gold of the scented whins. The observant visitor cannot fail to be attracted by customs and turns of speech, by traditions and tools which are obsolescent if not archaic in England. He will occasionally see in use in field and farmyard implements which went out of fashion so long ago in most parts of Great Britain that one may truly speak of them as medieval. Thus the toothed sickle, the flail, the one-eared spade, the clod-breaking mallet and seed-rake, the upright churn and the three-legged pot can all be closely matched in illustrations of English medieval rural life (Fig. 1). The boon-work which was an obligation owed by tenants to English landlords in the Middle Ages survives in the flax-pulling boons of Ulster, and the Anglo-Norman word for the lord's part of an estate, the demesne, is universally applied to the parklands of Ireland. The Irish baronies or kingdoms, as they are sometimes called, are similarly relics of the Middle Ages. The prevalence of the Roman Catholic religion, to which 76 per cent of the population of Ireland adheres—the figure is 94 per cent for the Republic of Ireland—reinforces this sense of the past; and the English dialects spoken in many districts, even if shot through with Gaelic-derived turns of phrase, are strikingly Elizabethan. A strong medieval flavour attaches to the feast-day gatherings and patterns, to strawboys, wrenboys and the Christmas mummers. Medieval too is the diversity of folk-customs and of locally-made tools, which will be found to vary from one

178
121
[771]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

OLD PISHROGUES

The whistle of the 7.15 now replaced cock-crow. But if it were indeed true that peasant values had perished entirely and that the rural population was transformed into the moronic cattle-herders of Filson Young's *Ireland at the Cross-Roads*, then this book could not have been written. Luckily a mountain farmer will still relate time to nature and refer to a moment of summer twilight, in a memorable phrase quoted by Dr. James Delargy, as 'the time when the dew was thinking of falling'. The wonder is that so much lore and so many relics of pre-famine days have survived. Yet the term 'old pishrogues' which is applied to all varieties of witchcraft and fairy lore—even if sometimes used in awe rather than contempt—shows that these things are now regarded objectively and are no longer an accepted part of social life. Superstitious practices tend to be carried out in secret and to be resorted to only when more rational methods have been tried and found wanting. Many of the old customs, however, have had their life prolonged by children's games, the seasonal bonfires and May Queens becoming their amusements.

Most of the pishrogues relate to fairies and to trees, wells and stones; and that these elder faiths have their roots in a very remote pre-agricultural phase of human evolution is attested by their very general observance among primitive people. As an example we may take the South African Bushmen, one of the lowliest branches of the human family. In a recent report from G. P. van der Post's expedition to the Kalahari we read that in the heart of the Bushman country there are sacred hills which are regarded as the home of very ancient spirits. Van der Post was told that 'right on the top of the central hill there was a spring of water and beside it a tree which bore the fruit of knowledge, and close by the tree a rock with deep marks where the greatest spirit of all had knelt to pray'.[1] The sacred hill-tops, the ancestral spirits, the well of water, the 'gentle' tree and the cup-marked stone are familiar themes in Irish folk tradition. Throughout western Europe, from the fifth century Council of Arles onwards, churchmen denounced those 'who offer vows to trees, or wells, or stones'. The great religions have had to come to terms with such cults, in Monsoon Asia as

[1] *The Times* (14th December, 1955).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

512 352 [777] besom's association with everyday tasks and with the fireside endows it with special power. Thrown after a departing matchmaker or anyone going on an important errand, it brings luck to his mission.

●771 789 178 For most people, needless to say, such things are now meaningless superstitions—old pishrogues. True, one still hears occasionally of cows being blinked, of a black cock buried alive as a cure for epilepsy, of a healthy woman pining away because a neighbour was sticking pins into a waxen image. These are stray survivals, doomed to disappear; but in a larger sense the past never wholly dies: it lives on buried in the minds of men and in the landscapes they have fashioned.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

4

The Supernatural and the Esthetic

Catholicism

BECAUSE OF THE WRITINGS OF NATIVISTS, most visitors to Inis Beag believe that the Catholicism of the folk embodies an ideal unattained even on the mainland, where the faith is thought to set an example for all of Christendom. In fact, however, the worship of the islanders is obsessively oriented toward salvation in the next world with a corresponding preoccupation with sin in this world; there is a marked tendency toward polytheism in the manner in which they relate to the Blessed Virgin and certain Irish saints; rituals and sacred artifacts, Christian as well as pagan, often are employed by them to serve magical ends; and, finally, many observances that they hold to be orthodox Catholic are in reality idiosyncratic to Inis Beag or to Ireland. Christian morality in its outward manifestations, as we have seen, is realized to a remarkable degree, but it is less a product of the emphasis placed on good works as a means of gaining salvation than of the techniques of social control exercised by the priests and an overwhelming fear of damnation.

Coexisting with Catholicism in Inis Beag are pre-Celtic, Celtic, and early medieval Christian retentions of religious beliefs and behavior. It is these which are accentuated in the writings of primitivists, some of whom have ignored altogether Catholicism in the lives of the folk. Nativists and primitivists part company in the matter of religion in peasant Ireland, and writers of nativistic persuasion have exerted the most influence on visitors to Inis Beag, who are preponderantly Irish Catholic. Theologians and scholars in Ireland label as pagan unorthodox religious forms from any historical period, and many of these have become reinterpreted with similar Catholic elements. The pagan array of supernatural beings includes a variety of spirits and demons, witches, ghosts, and phantom ships; among other retentions are taboos, signs which foretell the future, charms and incantations of a protective nature, folk medicines, and the aforementioned emphasis on natural foods and other products impinging on the human body.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

The islanders know little of church dogma and the purport of rituals and feast days. What knowledge they do possess often is distorted, and they seldom read the Bible or manuals of instruction or engage in doctrinal discussions among themselves. I discovered by consulting priests and church histories, dictionaries, and exegeses—both before and during my stay in Inis Beag—that I came to know far more about the faith than any of the folk, and I sometimes imparted what I had learned to the curious in homes and even in the pubs. Instruction is welcomed by the islanders, but they dislike criticism from any quarter of their idiosyncratic Catholic observances, pagan retentions and reinterpretations, and non-Christian behavior. They also dislike being told, especially by returned emigrants, that "Catholic culture" in Ireland is quite unlike that in other parts of the world and arouses dismay and even incredulity in many foreign Catholics who visit Ireland.

The paths to salvation, according to the islanders, are threefold: obeying the curate, performing the rituals of the church diligently and punctiliously, and conforming to the moral laws of Christianity. Being saved, however, is to them much more a matter of escaping Hell than of achieving Purgatory and eventually Heaven, and they experience more anxiety about failing to conform to the moral laws than pride in conforming to them. Furthermore, it is sins of thought rather than sins of deed which preoccupy them. While they boast of their morality as expressed in behavior, they labor under a heavy burden of guilt arising out of repressed sexual desires, jealousy and envy of their neighbors, and anti-clerical sentiment, among other attitudes. It is difficult for most of them to confess these to the priest, and thus their feelings of guilt and fear of damnation are compounded. Many times in Inis Beag I heard a "good Catholic" defined as one who "thinks mostly of death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell" and guides his conduct accordingly. Life on earth is regarded as merely a brief prelude to the "eternity stretching beyond the grave," to be lived only in preparation for the Day of Judgment and borne patiently in all its "pain and suffering." Priests and nuns are envied for many reasons, among them the fact that they can "spend most of their time preparing for death" and thus are in a better position to achieve salvation.

It is apparent to outside observers and to the folk alike that women are more pious than men. They attend church more regularly, are more serious of mien at mass and during other religious observances, and are more prone to talk of religious matters than men. Many women go to mass daily, and it is said that all of the women of the island, but only ten men, have evaded going to Hell magically by attending mass nine Fridays in succession after Ash Wednesday (or, according to some, the first Friday in each month for nine successive months, or the first Friday after Ash Wednesday for nine years in succession). The reasons for this are several, but the most important are that women are less contented than men and thus have a greater need for the solace that religion affords, and they are more restricted socially than men and by fulfilling various church obligations can escape household confinement and interact with other women. Some islanders are thought to be overly pious—"wear their religion on their sleeves"—and are subjects of amusement and derision; those who use piety to cloak avarice

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) · Inis Beag

and other Christian vices are detested and are likely to become the butt of satirical anecdotes and ballads.

In many primitive and peasant societies, in which Christianity has dispossessed polytheistic religions, it has been observed that polytheism has left a legacy whereby the Virgin Mary and various angels and saints are worshipped as dispensers of personal power in their own right. This has been extended to the Trinity among the Anang of Nigeria, who believe that God provided independent power for his human son, Jesus, with which to convert the world to Christianity, and for the Holy Spirit (who has joined the indigenous pantheon of spirits) to act for mankind as healer, prognosticator, forgiver of sins, and protector against ghosts, witches, and sorcerers (Messenger 1959:291). Most Inis Beag folk regard God and the Devil, among Christian supernatural beings, as the only possessors of personal power. But some think that power emanating from the deity is manipulated by the Blessed Virgin and particular saints, and they as well as he must be propitiated for best results. When asked why she prayed to St. Enda rather than to other saints, an old woman said that this saint is "nearer to God" and therefore able to capture more of his power than others. A few islanders hold that these intermediary entities possess power not emanating from the deity, and thus may be approached individually through prayer and sacrifice for their favor. The saints most often appeased are St. Patrick, St. Brigid, St. Enda, and the patron saint of the island.

The Devil is thought to command power for evil as great as or greater than that of the Virgin Mary and the saints for good. Some believe that he controls malevolent pagan beings as well as his own minions from Hell, and he both tempts Christians to sin and attacks them bodily causing sickness, injury, and other misfortunes. He is abroad at all times, although his power is amplified on such occasions as Allhallows' Eve, and sometimes he can be seen by human eyes—as a huge, dark, indistinct figure standing at a distance, usually after nightfall or when it is raining heavily. One evening during a severe storm, I visited without advance notice a man milking his cow at the back of the island, and he would not approach me as I stood atop a fence wearing oilskin and sou'wester until I called out to him and established the fact that I was not the "big fellow" come to do him harm. Animals are especially sensitive to the presence of Satan, and asses which run about braying loudly are believed to have seen him.

The folk do not admit to dissent or skepticism as regards their Catholic faith, despite their anti-clerical attitudes, but skepticism can be inferred from many of their utterances. Most doubt centers around the reality of the hereafter and its nature, if it exists. Invariably when I talked of religion with them, whether singly or in groups, my own views of the afterworld were solicited eagerly, and such remarks as the following, pronounced with anxiety, were forthcoming from them: "Is there really a life after death?", "Will we meet relatives there?", "Is it bodies or souls that live in Heaven?", "If we all meet in Heaven, won't it be too crowded?", "How could God be so cruel as to put people in a big fire?", and "Sure, no one has ever returned to tell of the afterlife." The most public expression of skepticism that my wife and I encountered was in a pub when she was requested to sing "Galway Bay" before a crowd of boisterous men; after she sang the line, "And if

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) · Inis Beag

791 795 there's going to be a life hereafter," someone shouted out from the audience, "There won't be.", and the others laughed so uproariously and for so long a time that she had to discontinue singing.

795 Only Catholics can enter Heaven, so most islanders claim, and among the faithful only saints go directly to Heaven at death, as preordained by God. All others who escape Hell must sojourn in Purgatory, where the temporal punishment of sins previously forgiven must be endured, and the guilt of unrepented venial sins cleared away. Conceptions of Purgatory are vague, but it is felt that severe punishments are meted out there, and that the stay of most Catholics is a long one, even though mitigated by earthly indulgences and penances. Theirs is an example of what some theologians term a "dreary interpretation of Purgatory," with its emphasis on the sinful nature of man. Several times we were told that we would enter Heaven even though not Catholic, because "religions are like canoes which set out on separate courses for a mainland port, yet all reach their destination;" always we were cautioned not to disclose this personal belief to the curate.

796 The most significant religious events of the year in Inis Beag are certain Catholic feast days, masses performed in homes twice each year, marriages, funerals, visits to the holy well, and several pagan observances. Of the many feast days commemorating the mysteries of the faith and honoring particular saints, eight are holydays of obligation in Ireland: Circumcision, St. Patrick, Ascension, Corpus Christi, Assumption, All Saints, Immaculate Conception, and Nativity. On these days the folk attend mass, abstain from work, and do not conduct business. The feasts of St. Patrick and Christmas among these, and the lesser feasts of St. Brigid, Easter, the patron saint of Inis Beag, St. John, All Souls, St. Martin, and St. [178] Stephen, are considered the most important locally. Although pagan elements are [182] incorporated to some extent in all feast days, reinterpretations are most in evidence in the feasts of St. Brigid, St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, and thus they will be taken up later in the chapter.

785 796 Lent in Inis Beag is a period during which men are hard at work farming, and social activities are at low ebb. The laws of fast and abstinence during Lent [262] impose no hardships on the folk in light of the simplicity of their diet, with meat often absent from the table and only one full meal taken during the day as a matter of course. The standard of living in the island is such that for most people [273] there is "too little to give up anything." Many islanders abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages during Lent, and will imbibe only on St. Patrick's Day, March 17th. Following the shipwreck (six days after Ash Wednesday in 1960), when salvaged Scotch whiskey was present in vast quantities, several men who had "sworn off" spirits took to drinking Vat 69 in the privacy of their homes; when the practice became known publicly, they claimed that they were "off the stout" only, 796 which is what most men drink ordinarily because of the high cost of liquor. St. [527] Patrick's Day is much anticipated because it is a holyday of obligation when work ceases, drink can be taken by abstainers, and there is a dance in the boat house in the evening. The dance did not materialize in 1960, because the time of flood tide, when the grounded freighter could best be boarded, coincided with the time of the [177] dance. Before mass on St. Patrick's Day, boys in groups search for shamrocks, which, [295] if found, will ensure the finder "riches" in the future. Women that day wear

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

to put their property in a state of good repair, which, in retrospect, is regarded as a benefit, however much they might have complained of the labor involved during the previous weeks.

The sacred well, probably appropriated from the Druids 13 centuries ago, still attracts the folk and occasionally pilgrims from Inis Thiar and other islands. On the mainland, patterns often were associated with holy wells named after saints, but this does not seem to have been the case in Inis Beag. It was customary until about ten years ago for those who came to pray here to attach bits of cloth, rosaries, or sacred objects obtained from holy places of pilgrimage on the mainland and abroad, but this practice was halted by the clergy as smacking of paganism. Now it is visited for religious purposes mostly by small groups on Sunday afternoon, and by persons about to emigrate and their families who come to pray for the good fortune of the soon departed. The water in the spring is not considered holy, but capable of "bringing the grace of God and the saint," and if it is drunk during prayer, it is believed to be especially efficacious for curing sterility, among other afflictions. In this century, a partially blind islander is believed to have regained his sight after paying nine visits to the well on successive Sundays, and other miraculous cures from earlier times are reported. Those who come to the spring always seek a tiny fish or eel in the water, which, if observed, is merely a good omen to some but an assurance of reaching Heaven to others. Attaching rags to the well and seeking cures and omens there are all examples of reinterpretation. The spring also is used as a source of water by farmers who pasture stock in nearby fields and by thirsting passersby.

Pagan Supernaturalism

Pagan supernaturalism is disavowed by the folk, and it is difficult to know how widely held are beliefs in this sphere. That they are held is indisputable, as attested by the active efforts of curates up to this day to eradicate them. Youth of the island overtly deny the existence of other than church approved spiritual entities, although the most outspoken disclaimer of paganism among them is visited occasionally by the ghost of his father, who urges the continuation of a family feud. But elders cling tenaciously to indigenous beliefs and practices, about which they are extremely secretive for fear of being ridiculed by outsiders and their more skeptical fellows. Defensive about being labeled backward, the islanders feel that the "superstitions" they are said to hold most contribute to this impression. When the folk talk of pagan retentions and reinterpretations, they ascribe them to those who lived at the time that their parents or grandparents did, or to certain of their superstitious contemporaries. A notorious dissenter, who sometimes has occasion to patrol the shores of Inis Beag before dawn, antagonizes his neighbors by deriding them for their fear of venturing after dark to the back of the island, where fairies and ghosts hold sway. On telling him of my intention to spend a night resting atop a *clochán* near the Atlantic coast, he said, "The only thing that will happen is you'll hear the cocks crow in the morning." He is the only person who admitted to me that he disbelieves the teachings of the church concerning the soul

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

and its fate. In further mocking his fellows for their apprehensions about death and its aftermath, he proclaimed that the soul, "if there is such a thing, goes nowhere after the heart stops beating."

Celtic deities no longer are a part of the belief system of the islanders, but the culture heroes of the Iron Age—such as Cuchulainn, Finn, and Oisin—still are extolled in legends, and the promontory fort and other ancient monuments and some of the geographical features (for instance, glacial boulders) in Inis Beag and nearby islands are explained by the actions of Celtic heroes. Spirits, demons, and witches of many sorts are the supernatural beings from the Celtic, and possibly pre-Celtic, era which figure most importantly in the pagan segment of the folk religion. They have become incorporated into orthodox Catholicism by being declared "works of the Devil" by those who admit to their existence (It is said that two priests of peasant background have admitted to this belief publicly in Inis Beag.)—a reinterpretation resorted to by many primitive and folk peoples under the duress of acculturation with dominance. The spiritual entities most linked with the Irish, both in writings and in popular imagination, are the trooping and solitary fairies, known to the islanders as the "little people," "good people," or "gentry." In Inis Beag, only the leprechaun and "red man" among the numerous solitary fairies are known. William Butler Yeats numbers the banshee, mermaid, pookah, and water horse among the solitary fairies (Yeats ND :76–77), but these are not regarded as such by the folk (The latter two are animal spirits, or demons, rather than human spirits.); also found in Inis Beag are the sea spirit, or "headless body," and other minor spirits and demons.

Fairies seldom permit themselves to be seen, but most of the islanders have experienced their presence, if only through having objects mysteriously misplaced by them or hearing them sing and cobble. These beings differ considerably in appearance—according to type, sex, and age—but most of them are knee-high and wear green jackets, flat red caps, and buckled shoes. The trooping fairies live in *clochán* and thorn bushes and spend most of their time feasting, singing, dancing, fighting, playing games, and making love. A spirited hurling match played by fairies on the strand was described to me by an observer who had witnessed it from a canoe approaching the island; he and his mates rowed close enough to overhear the creatures call out to each other by name. Small whirlwinds are a sign of their passing, and a farmer who was haying and failed to say the proper "God bless them.", as such a wind stirred his field, was punished by having all of the cocks that he had accumulated blown away. One verse of my ballad, poorly received by most islanders, tells of men who were afraid to board the freighter for several nights after trooping fairies had been seen dining in the mess and a ghost pacing the deck. Fairies disregard human beings most of the time, but they can harm those who disregard or speak ill of them, as well as play "fairy pranks" out of sheer capriciousness. One of their favorite modes of attack is to cast "fairy darts" at their victims; on the mainland, these are prehistoric flint artifacts, but in Inis Beag they are any small pebbles supposedly thrown from the sky to cause bodily harm. An Inis Thiar man collected a number of darts allegedly cast at him by irate gentry, only to have the collection confiscated by the curate in whom he indiscreetly confided. The most feared practice of trooping fairies is that of steal-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

persons considered overly superstitious. Interesting to note here is the fact that even before the beginning of this century, strength of belief in the pagan supernatural varied among the folk.

Three water dwellers found in the ocean surrounding Inis Beag are the mermaid, sea spirit, and water horse. At least one and maybe three mermaids are associated with particular locations along the coastline of the island. This spirit usually is found sitting on a rock with her fish tail in the water and combing her long hair, although she has been seen hovering over the surface of the sea in a "robe of mist." Discussion of her in the pubs always induces embarrassment among the men, because her perfectly formed female upper body is nude and not always hidden by her tresses; she appears to delight in exposing herself to the puritanical folk. The sea spirit is called the "headless body" for the reason that his seaweed covered hulk lacks any appendages. Like the seal who bears a human soul, he favors following in the wake of *curach*—bobbing up and down in the water and staring balefully at the seamen with huge eyes. Only by dropping an object containing gold into the ocean deeps, which the spirit finds irresistible, can his pursuit be impeded short of rowing back to the island. My wife and I brought to Inis Beag a foot-high statue of a troll, purchased two years before in Norway, made of moss with large glass eyes, which we hung from the wall of our kitchen (as we had from the dashboard of our car) as a good luck charm. It aroused excitement among fishermen who visited us because of its resemblance to the headless body; one man reasoned that this being must inhabit all of the northern seas, and probably arouses equal consternation among Scottish and Scandinavian seafarers. The water horse is a demon counterpart of the mermaid, with black body of a steed and tail of a giant fish. Until 40 years ago, it lived in the fresh water lake of Inis Beag, where it was seen on certain nights traveling abreast the surface with its head held high and mane waving in the wind. Now it is seen only at sea and infrequently at great distance.

The single pookah of Inis Beag resides in a Copper-Bronze Age tumulus (see Fig. 12), which became a medieval cemetery with rough headstones still in place; located on the western margin of the common land, it is known as the Hill of Ferns. In the Middle Ages, the church urged systematic reinterpretation of Christian and pagan elements (It was advocated as early as 601 by Pope Gregory VII in a letter to priests who were proselytizing the primitive Britons.). This policy is attested in Inis Beag and neighboring islands not only by Christian graveyards being located contiguous to pagan ones, but by Christian church buildings incorporating Druidic temples and Celtic holy wells being appropriated by Christian worshippers. During the day, the "dog of the tumulus," as this demon is called, will twist the limbs of unwary individuals who chance to fall asleep on the mound, and at night it is known to race across the sands of strand and common land, altering its size at will from that of a small dog to that of a bull, to frighten those who might be passing. It appears that Irish emigrants carried both the mermaid and pookah abroad with them as early as the seventeenth century, at least to the West Indies. In doing research among the "Black Irish" of Montserrat during 1965, 1966, and last year, I discovered a mermaid with white skin who guards a pot of gold buried on top of Chance's Mountain, and a pookah in the form of a

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

November 1st. Imbolc heralded the coming of spring with the lactation of ewes, while at Beltaine cattle were driven to open grazing after passing between bonfires which magically protected them against disease and ensured their fertility. The harvest commenced with Lughnasa, and the grazing season ended with Samhain. Of these festivals, Imbolc has become reinterpreted with the feast of St. Brigid; Beltaine and Samhain, known today as May Day and Allhallows respectively, have remained almost untouched by Christianity and are observed in Inis Beag; but Lughnasa has disappeared from island tradition. Lughnasa still is celebrated in many parts of Ireland and is the subject of a monumental folklore study—Maire MacNeill's *The Festival of Lughnasa*; until the introduction of early potatoes into Inis Beag, harvesting commenced on this day, but any other practices associated with Lughnasa were abandoned long ago. Minor pagan festivals have become reinterpreted with Whitsuntide and the feasts of St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, all of which are observed in Inis Beag.

Brigid, the most renowned of Irish female saints, was a cowherd and therefore is associated with cattle and with flowers, such as the dandelion, which nourish young lambs in the spring. On the last day of January, a small "Brigid's Cross" is fashioned from straw in each household of Inis Beag, and is thrust into the thatching at the end of the feast day. Crosses once were made from rushes, wood, metal, and even paper, and it is possible to determine the age of a thatched cottage being dismantled or renovated by counting the number of crosses salvaged from the straw debris. The Celts worshipped the sun whose symbol was the swastika, and the Brigid's Cross takes this form. It is a charm which protects the house (and the byre on the mainland) and those within it from harm, especially by fire, during the year. At the beginning of this century, a destitute woman who lived alone used to go from door to door begging for food and carrying a large "Brigid's Doll" made of straw and dressed immaculately in white with a picture of the saint on its breast. Some of the folk pulled straw from the doll to manufacture their crosses. After the woman recited the following poem, she was presented with food in honor of the saint, for which she blessed each person in the household with the doll:

Here comes Brigid	She is deaf and
Dressed in white.	She is dumb.
Give her something	For God's sake,
For the night.	Give her some.

Today, small groups of girls travel about the island emulating their predecessor by begging for coins to buy candy and donate to the church. A Brigid's Doll dressed in confirmation garb is carried by the leader of each group, and is used to confer blessings after the girls have recited in unison the two verses.

May Eve and Allhallows' Eve are both times when it is dangerous to go out of doors alone at night or be abroad after midnight, for the "big fellow" roams the back of the island, and everywhere pagan fairies, witches, vindictive ghosts, and the dog of the tumulus search for human victims. The safety of cattle is of particular concern to the folk on May Eve, and a common practice is to attach to the horn or tail of a cow a cloth containing a piece of iron which has

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

origin, and the church honors St. Martin of Tours in the liturgy of November 11th. O Suilleabhain suggests that the Catholic feast has been reinterpreted with a pagan festival, which had the sacrificial shedding of blood as one of its main facets. St. Martin also is associated with the grinding of corn and with miraculous powers for causing growth in plants and creating animals from inanimate matter. In Inis Beag, the saint is regarded as a miller who was martyred in Ireland during the Middle Ages by being cast under a mill wheel and ground to death. A few islanders still observe the taboos of not turning wheels or spinning on the vigil and feast day to honor his martyrdom. The Sunday before St. Martin's Day is called "bloody Sunday," when those who can afford to do so butcher a sheep to be consumed by the family on the feast day; others less fortunate kill a fowl or duck during the vigil. Using the sacrificed animal's blood, the father or mother makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each member of the family, while praying that the saint guard the safety of all in the year to follow. Some folk use the blood to bless in a like manner the fireplace, bedposts, front door, and outbuildings; all crosses, including those on the forehead, are allowed to remain until obliterated by natural causes.

Just as the girls of Inis Beag carry the Brigid's Doll and beg from door to door on the feast day of the saint, the boys do the same with a wren attached to a long wooden pole on the morning of St. Stephen's Day, the feast day following Christmas. The "wrenboys" travel in pairs and are invited into each home, where they are awarded coins for dancing and singing this song:

> Wren, wren, the king of the birds,
> St. Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.
> So little I am, my family is great.
> Get up landlady and give us a break.
>
> Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
> And give us a shilling to carry the wren.
> If you haven't a shilling a ha'penny will do.
> If you haven't a ha'penny—God bless you.

Handkerchiefs, ribbons, and a sprig of holly also are attached to the pole, and in 1959 only one pair of youths managed to "hunt the wren" successfully and thus maintain the tradition. A home is not blessed by these visitations, as in the case of the groups of girls on St. Brigid's Day, but the act of giving money is believed to bring luck to the household. In some regions of the mainland, wrenboys wear straw masks, animal skins, or horns, and carry the wren on a holly bush or decorated wooden tray as they march in procession shouting and singing songs to the accompaniment of homemade skin tambourines (Evans 1957:279). Little is known of the pagan roots of the ceremony.

In addition to the reinterpretations associated with the holy well and with Celtic festivals, there are many others of lesser significance of which only three will be considered here: beliefs concerning ghosts, the evil eye, and the afterworld. We have seen that most of the folk have had contact of some sort with the fairies; they also have witnessed ghosts—called "shades"—in corporeal form in Inis Beag or sailing the surrounding waters. These beings, who "aren't of this world," some-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

771 775
times are recognized as recently deceased islanders, but more often they are "strangers" from another generation or another region of Ireland. They appear and disappear without warning and travel silently singly or in small groups. Usually they pay little or no heed to the living who chance to observe them, but they will attack those who have wronged them and occasionally others for seemingly no reason. A man told me of being beaten severely by three unknown men, obviously shades, early one evening at the back of the island; he might have been killed but for the intervention of two women, also strangers to him. At one time, persons who feared being assaulted by vengeful or capricious ghosts carried coals to protect themselves. The folk believe that shades are souls of the dead in Purgatory, which embraces the earth as well as a spiritual locus. While on earth, they do [783] penance by laboring at economic tasks—carrying seaweed, planting gardens, and fishing—near their former homes, and the work that they accomplish is undone once they disappear.

771 776 754 178 826
Christianity touches on the evil eye in more ways than providing the magical incantation, "God bless you.", which automatically opposes the power of God to that of the witch. Many islanders explain the evil eye by positing the presence of both the deity and the Devil in each human body. God rests on the right side and urges a person to do good deeds, while Satan rests on the left and tempts him to commit sins. In most individuals, the deity dominates the body much of the time, but in the case of one with the evil eye, the Devil somehow has gained perpetual ascendancy and transmits his destructive power through the left eye of the person. It is the constant flowing of malignant power from within which causes the disfigurement in or near the left eye of the witch. The association [822] of evil with the left is a phenomenon widely distributed among the peoples of the world, as is the linking of evil with black. Ghost masks are painted black to [171] symbolize their evil nature by the Anang of Nigeria, and sacrifices to deity and ancestors at shrines are made with the right hand, and to ghosts, witches, and the spirit of sorcery with the left. In Inis Beag, people who have swarthy skin, black 826 hair, and brown eyes, although not considered witches, are thought to possess evil 828 power of some sort and are to be avoided. A curate possessing these physical traits 754 who served in the island recently was mistrusted and shunned whenever possible [793] even though "a man chosen by God Almighty." An interesting conjecture is how successful would be the research in Inis Beag of an anthropologist with dark complexion and hair and a cast in his brown left eye.

775 772
The afterworld of the Celts, known as the Isle of the Blest or the Land of Youth, lay to the west of Ireland. It has been sighted by a few fortunate Inis Beag fishermen, either low-lying on the horizon with lights sparkling when it has risen from the sea, as it does periodically, or in the ocean deeps with the spires of its buildings and their tolling bells near the surface. This is a forested land inhabited by souls of the dead, and by fairies who travel to and from the mainland in "fairy ships." Few islanders now syncretize the Isle of the Blest with the Christian Heaven, as was common a century ago, but there are those who claim to have seen fairy ships from there skirt Inis Beag headed for the mainland. These are masted schooners carrying lights with no signs of life on their decks, which heave into sight and vanish instantaneously and can move far more swiftly than their counter-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

775
772 parts fashioned by human hands. A valley in Inis Thiar is believed to have been created by such a ship passing over the island, "with a great roar and blowing of [173] wind." According to Celtic tradition, souls not only transmigrated to the Land of [825] Youth but became reincarnated on earth or embodied in animals through metempsychosis. The belief in reincarnation appears not to have persisted in Inis Beag, but seals sometimes are thought to be repositories of souls; those creatures so possessed look and act human and attach themselves to fishermen who have aided or harmed them, and whose *curach* they will pursue relentlessly. I was told by an old man of a seal that he had cursed at sea for fouling his net, which later followed in his wake for many miles glaring with rage, and finally pursued him 30 feet onto the strand as he and his frightened mates carried the canoe hurriedly to its cot.

Religion and Personality

157
771 It is appropriate here to assess the basic personality structure of Inis Beag islanders, since traits such as sexual puritanism, hypochondria, depression, masochism, conformism, and ambivalence toward authority are linked causally with religion in a very direct manner. Other personality characteristics, already or yet to be considered, which are more peripheral to religion include secretiveness, envy and jealousy, dogmatism, indolence, feelings of inferiority, and verbal skill.

157
831 Probably the most prominent trait of Inis Beag (and Irish) personality is sexual puritanism. Its etiology is complex and much debated, but appears to embrace most significantly historical (such as the influence of ascetic monasticism and Jansenism), sociocultural (such as the Oedipus complex and male solidarity), and psychological (such as masochism) variables. How long it has been a major component of Irish national character is conjectural, for it is impossible to appraise with accuracy Irish society, culture, and personality prior to the nineteenth century. [174] Sexual attitudes and behavior in Celtic, medieval, and early modern times can be surmised only from tangential and questionable sources; depending on which sources are quoted, as good a case can be made for sexual puritanism as its opposite before 1800.

157
831
864
626
793
834 The inculcation of sexual puritanism in Inis Beag must be examined in three contexts: informal social controls of the curate and those imposed by the islanders on themselves, the influence of visiting "missions," and enculturation in the home. The first of these has been taken up at length in the last chapter. Suffice it to say here, some folk (especially certain youths who consider themselves "worldly") resent the intrusions of priests and neighbors into their sexual lives. They ask what right have young, virginal, inexperienced, and sexually unknowledgeable curates to give advice and pass judgments in this sphere. Equally resented are those persons who hide themselves in the darkness or behind fences to overhear the conversations of passersby, which may pertain to sexual matters, and those who maintain close scrutiny of visitors during the summer, both day and
831 night, in order to discover them in "compromising" situations. Sexual rumors run
203 rife in the island, such as those concerning the "nude" sunbathing of mainland
[609] girls (bared shoulders and lower thighs) and the "attacks" on them at night by

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

women in the island and are attracted by what they consider to be a more rewarding life on the mainland and abroad, and so emigrate for these reasons. One of the most "pitied" girls in the island is a returned emigrant to the United States, who, despite being 24 years of age and suitable for marriage in every way, is not being courted, although it is known that she came back to Inis Beag to obtain a husband.

All of the conditions making for personality depression—the intrusion of priests into secular affairs, hypochondria, malicious gossiping, poverty, boredom, and isolation—also instigate emigration. My analysis assigns the secular excesses of the clergy and their implementation of the Jansenist doctrines of the Catholic Church in Ireland as the primary push factors in emigration and supports the contention made by Paul Blanshard that, "When all the reasons for a flight from Ireland have been mentioned, there still remains a suspicion that Irish young people are leaving their nation largely because it is a poor place in which to be happy and free. Have the priests created a civilization in which the chief values of youth and love are subordinate to Catholic discipline?" (Blanshard 1954:154). What "remains a suspicion" to Blanshard as regards all of Ireland is very much a reality in Inis Beag.

Other internal factors accounting for emigration which are considered important by the folk are the deadening of initiative by government services and subsidies and the institutionalization of emigration itself. While many islanders believe that the government ought to support even further the local economy in order to combat emigration, others feel that its present level of benevolence has had a deleterious effect on their character. Young people observing the indolence of their elders, according to this opinion, are shamed into seeking a more active life away from Inis Beag. In my estimation, this is a superficial cause, but the institutionalization of emigration is a vital factor, more recognized by youth than by their parents. Just as in the case of late marriage, emigration since famine times gradually has become an expectation—a "way of life"—and it will stimulate some folk to leave even though, in the estimation of their fellows, it might be advantageous for them to remain. When a young man says that he has an "itch to go to England and work for a spell," he usually is being motivated in this manner.

Among the external causes of emigration, the most significant are the growth of prosperity on the mainland and abroad, the influence of ever increasing numbers of tourists who visit and returned emigrants who come for short stays or to retire in Inis Beag, the impact of the mass media of communication, and the increasing availability of scholarship funds for children to attend secondary schools on the mainland. The United States has been a land of freedom, opportunity, and prosperity to the Irish since the early seventeenth century, but particularly during and after the famine (Approximately 1,000,000 Irish emigrated between 1846 and 1851, and another 1,500,000 perished from hunger, according to Woodham-Smith 1962:411.). The first record of substantial emigration from Inis Beag is in 1822, and from that time until the Second World War most islanders migrated to the United States, never to return. However, with the growth of prosperity in England after 1946, the stream of emigration shifted in that direction. Not only did jobs become plentiful across the Irish Sea then, but large, viable ethnic communities served by Irish clergy had sprung up in the larger cities. It became possi-

JOHN C. MESSENGER

later on, particularly in those families where competition for the inheritance of property is engendered among siblings by the fathers' attempts to ensure favored treatment in old age.

Men are far more active socially than are women. The latter are restricted by custom mostly to visiting, attending parties during the winter, and participating in church-associated activities. Many women leave their cottages only to attend mass, wakes, and funerals or to make infrequent calls on relatives; my wife and I talked with some elderly women who had not visited other villages or walked to the back of the island for thirty or more years. Men not only attend parties with their womenfolk but go to dances during the summer, frequent the pubs, play cards almost nightly during November and December (the period when once people congregated to hear storytellers), visit the homes of kin and friends or meet along the trails at night, and range the entire island and the sea about it in their economic pursuits. Before the age of benevolent government, women shared many economic tasks with men, such as collecting seaweed, baiting lines, and gutting fish. But now they tend to household chores and only milk cows and perform some of the lighter farming jobs with their fathers and husbands.

The island folk are devout Catholics, despite the fact that they are critical of their priests and hold pagan religious beliefs. Youth of Inis Beag overtly disallow the existence of other than church-approved supernatural entities. However, their elders cling to traditional pagan beliefs and practices (many of which are Druidic in origin) about which they are extremely secretive for fear of being ridiculed by outsiders and their more skeptical neighbors. The non-Christian array of spiritual beings includes various spirits and demons, ghosts, witches, phantom ships, and animals and material objects possessing human attributes and volitions. Prominent among the spirits thought to inhabit Inis Beag are the trooping and solitary fairies, sea creatures, mermaids, and the banshee. The most formidable of the demons is a pooka which lives in a Bronze Age burial mound and roams the strand and common land at night altering its shape and size at will; during the day it will twist the limbs of unwary persons who choose the hill for a resting place. Ghosts, called "shades," are frequently seen after dark performing economic tasks. They are thought to be doing penance in purgatory, which embraces the earth as well as a spiritual locus; this is one example of the many reinterpretations of Christian and pagan belief effected by the islanders. The only form of witchcraft practiced today is the casting of the evil eye. At least three persons, suitably ostracized, are believed to be able to perpetrate evil

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

754

by the act of complimenting their victims. Other religious retentions found in Inis Beag are a multitude of taboos, divination through the seeking of omens, magical charms and incantations of a protective nature, and an emphasis on "natural" foods, folk medicines, and other products impinging on the human body.

It is believed by many people in Ireland that the Catholicism of the islanders embodies an ideal unattained on the mainland, where the faith is thought to set an example for the world. In fact, the worship of the folk is obsessively oriented toward salvation in the next world, with a corresponding preoccupation with sin in this world; there is a resemblance to polytheism in the manner in which they relate to the Blessed Virgin and Irish saints; Christian as well as pagan rituals and religious artifacts are often employed to serve magical ends; and many beliefs that they hold to be orthodox Catholic are in reality idiosyncratic to Inis Beag or Ireland. Christian morality in its "outward" manifestations is realized to a remarkable degree. This can be attributed, in part, to the emphasis placed on good works as a means of gaining salvation; but, more importantly, it results from the already-mentioned techniques of social control exercised by the clergy, based on an overwhelming fear of damnation.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The most active researchers in Inis Beag have been folklorists. Although ethnology as a discipline is not represented in the national universities and elsewhere in the Republic, folklore in the European humanistic tradition is strongly developed. The deliberate recording of the immense body of Irish folklore, folk beliefs, and folk customs began in the early part of the last century, was spurred by nativism—of which the Gaelic Revival was the main strand, and was institutionalized in the Republic with the formation of, first, the Folklore of Ireland Society in 1926, then the Irish Folklore Institute in 1930, and, finally, the Irish Folklore Commission in 1936 (Delargy 1957). For many years, commission collectors have visited Inis Beag, recording mostly the verbal art and material traits—with their associated behavior—of the island folk. They have not attempted to describe and analyze functionally and dynamically the total culture of the island; their visits have been brief and intermit-

to "our man") be chosen for the task. Earlier, according to island opinion, the same priest had caused to be committed to the "madhouse" a local man who publicly challenged certain of his actions. The unfortunate man was released six months later, as per law, since he was not mentally ill.

Sexual misconceptions are myriad in Inis Beag. The islanders share with most Western peoples the belief that men by nature are far more libidinous than women. The latter have been taught by some curates and in the home that sexual relations with their husbands are a "duty" which must be "endured," for to refuse coitus is a mortal sin. A frequently encountered assertion affixes the guilt for male sexual strivings on the enormous intake of potatoes of the Inis Beag male. (In Nigeria, among the people whom my wife and I studied, women are thought to be more sexually disposed than men and are the repositories of sexual knowledge; it is they who initiate coitus and so pose a threat to their spouses. Nigerian men place the blame on clitoridectomy performed just prior to marriage.) Asked to compare the sexual proclivities of Inis Beag men and women, one mother of nine said, "Men can wait a long time before wanting 'it,' but we can wait a lot longer." There is much evidence to indicate that the female orgasm is unknown—or at least doubted, or considered a deviant response. One middle-aged bachelor, who considers himself wise in the ways of the outside world and has a reputation for making love to willing tourists, described one girl's violent bodily reactions to his fondling and asked for an explanation; when told the "facts of life" of what obviously was an orgasm, he admitted not realizing that women also could achieve a climax, although he was aware that some of them apparently enjoyed kissing and being handled.

Inis Beag men feel that sexual intercourse is debilitating, a common belief in primitive and folk societies. They will desist from sex the night before they are to perform a job which will require the expenditure of great energy. Women are not approached sexually during menstruation or for months after childbirth, since they are considered "dangerous" to the male at these times. Returned "Yanks" have been denounced from the pulpit for describing American sexual practices to island youths, and such "pornographic" magazines as *Time* and *Life*, mailed by kin from abroad, have aroused curates to spirited sermon and instruction.

The separation of the sexes, started within the family, is augmented by separation in almost all segments of adolescent and adult activity. Boys and girls are separated to some extent in classrooms, and completely in

JOHN C. MESSENGER

*831
562 recess play and movement to and from school. During church services,
834 there is a further separation of adult men and women, as well as boys
[858] and girls, and each of the four groups leaves the chapel in its turn. The
[864] pubs are frequented only by men or by women tourists and female teachers who have spent several years on the mainland while training and thus are "set apart" (and, of course, by inquisitive female ethnographers). Women occasionally visit the shops to procure groceries, but it is
[443] more common for them to send their children to do so, since supplies and drinks are proffered across the same counter, and men are usually to be
[484] found on the premises. Even on the strand during summer months, male
[526] tourists tend to bathe at one end and women at the other. Some swimmers
[291] "daringly" change into bathing suits there, under towels and dresses—
[832] a custom practiced elsewhere in Ireland which has overtones of sexual
[184] catharsis.

154 It is often asserted that the major "escape valve" of sexual frustra-
[839] tion among single persons in Ireland is masturbation; frustration-aggres-
[272] sion theorists, however, would stress the ubiquity of drinking, alcoholism,
[733] disputes, and pugnacity as alternative outlets. Pugnacity can also be
[578] linked to the widespread problem of male identity. Our study revealed
83 that male masturbation in Inis Beag seems to be common, premarital
584 coitus unknown, and marital copulation limited as to foreplay and the manner of consummation. My wife and I never witnessed courting—
832 "walking out"—in the island. Elders proudly insist that it does not occur, but male youths admit to it in rumor. The claims of young men focus on "petting" with tourists and a few local girls, whom the "bolder" of them
• [771] kiss and fondle outside of their clothing. Island girls, it is held by their
[626] "lovers," do not confess these sins because they fail to experience
[783] pleasure from the contact. The male perpetrators also shun the confessional because of their fear of the priest.

833 We were unable to determine the frequency of marital coitus. A considerable amount of evidence indicates that privacy in the act is stressed and that foreplay is limited to kissing and rough fondling of the lower body, especially the buttocks. Sexual activity invariably is initiated
[291] by the husband. Only the male superior position is employed; intercourse takes place with underclothes not removed; and orgasm, for the man, is
[12] achieved quickly, almost immediately after which he falls asleep. (I must stress the provisional nature of these data, for they are based on a limited sample of respondents and relate to that area of sexual behavior least freely discussed.)

000 Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies,

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

cents and adults. It is through these agencies that Jansenism, masochism, the Oedipus complex, male solidarity, and other inextricably linked factors shape the severe sexual repression which gives rise to the cultural manifestations discussed in the last section of the chapter.

Priests of Jansenist persuasion have had subtle means of repressing the sexual instincts of the islanders in addition to the more extreme methods of controlling behavior—"clerical social control," such as employing informers, allocating indulgences, and refusing the sacraments to, and placing curses on, miscreants. Through sermons and informal classroom talks, the pulpit and the national school have served as effective vehicles of church discipline. The talks are especially telling, since they take advantage of the personality malleability of the formative years. The adult Irish person is rare who, although anticlerical, and even agnostic or atheistic, can transcend these early enculturative experiences, particularly in times of social crisis or personality disorganization. Erring islanders have often been sought out by priests and talked to privately after their ways have become known through gossip, informers, or the confessional. Some curates have suppressed courting, dancing, visiting, and other behavior either directly or "indirectly" (widely interpreted in Ireland) sexual in nature by physical action: that is, roaming the trails and fields at night seeking out young lovers and halting dancing by their threatening presence. This outward form of intrusion into island affairs is resented by most folk, as is the inward intrusion through priestly remonstrances; they question the right of the young, virginal, inexperienced, and sexually unknowledgeable curates to give advice in this sphere.

Church influence is also exerted through missions which visit Inis Beag every three to five years. On these occasions, two Redemptorist priests (occasionally Franciscans, Dominicans, or Passionists) spend a week on the island, where they conduct mass each morning and deliver long sermons in the chapel every afternoon or early evening. Everyone, even old people and mothers with young infants, is urged to attend to receive the "blessings of the mission." To some, this means shortening the time in purgatory for themselves or a deceased relative (an indulgence used to enforce church discipline). To others, absence carries with it the penalty of damnation, just as viewing an eel or small fish in the sacred well, appropriated from the Druids, promises salvation in an equally magical fashion. A mission usually has a theme, the variations of which are explored with high emotion and eloquence by the visiting clerics in

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

their exhortations. The most common theme is "controlling one's passions," but two others have often been addressed in the missionizing effort: abstaining from intoxicating drink and maintaining the faith as an emigrant. Collections are made by children to support the endeavor, and a list of contributors and their respective donations is displayed publicly. This technique of social control is also used by the curate at the several yearly offerings. A mission creates an emotionally charged atmosphere on the island, which continues for weeks after the departure of the clerics.

The seeds of repression are planted early in childhood by parents and kin through instruction supplemented by rewards and punishments, conscious imitation, and unconscious internalization. Although mothers bestow considerable affection and attention on their offspring, especially on their sons, physical love as manifested in intimate handling and kissing is rare in Inis Beag. Even breast feeding is uncommon because of its sexual connotation, and verbal affection comes to replace contact affection by late infancy. Any form of direct or indirect sexual expression—such as masturbation, mutual exploration of bodies, use of either standard or slang words relating to sex, and open urination and defecation—is severely punished by word or deed. Care is taken to cover the bodies of infants in the presence of siblings and outsiders, and sex is never discussed before children. Several times my wife inadvertently inquired as to whether particular women were pregnant, using that word before youths, only to be "hushed" or to have the conversation postponed until the young people could be herded outside. The adults were so embarrassed by the term that they found it difficult to communicate with her after the children had departed. She once aroused stupefaction among men on the strand when she attempted unsuccessfully to identify the gender of a bullock about to be shipped off.

It is in the home that the separation of sexes, so characteristic of Inis Beag life, is inaugurated among siblings in early childhood. Boys and girls in the family remain apart not only when interacting with the parent of the same sex at work, but when playing in and near the cottage and traveling to and from school. Parents and their older offspring read popular religious journals, found in most homes, many of the articles in which deal with sexual morality of the Irish Catholic variety.

One sociologist (Berger 1963: 66–92) classifies social control methods as those which involve physical violence or its threat (e.g., political and legal sanctions), those which result in economic pressures (e.g., occupation and market place relations), and, finally, those which